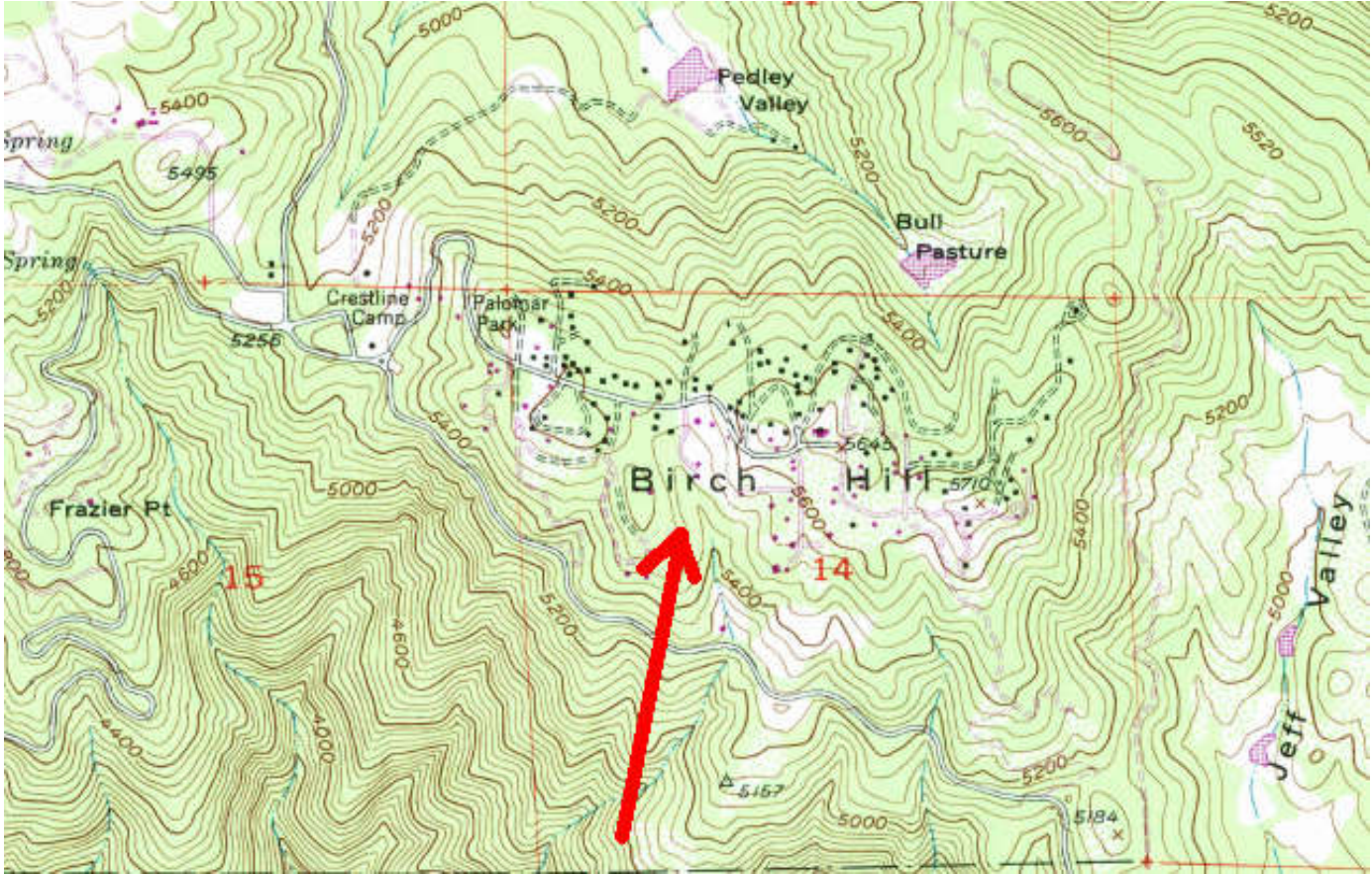


The Birch Brothers and Birch Hill on Palomar Mountain

Peter Brueggeman, 2025

Information and photograph sources in this biography are cited except for ancestry.com, familysearch.org, and findagrave.com; therefore, an uncited fact or photograph came from those sources. Property records were not researched; the properties noted are listed in the Bureau of Land Management's General Land Office Records database or found in newspaper notices.



Birch Hill on Palomar Mountain is named after Henry Clarkson Birch and his younger brother Arthur Clarkson Birch.

Henry Clarkson Birch was born in 1860, in Walton-le-Dale Parish, Lancashire County, England, to William Cooper Birch (born 1829; died April 26, 1901) and Maria Clarkson (born 1831; died March 16, 1894). His brother **Arthur Clarkson Birch** was born in October, November or December 1869, in Preston, Lancashire County, England.

In the 1861 England Census, their father William Cooper Birch is recorded living with his family in Walton-le-Dale parish, Lancashire County, with a housemaid and a nurse for his young children; his occupation was a calico block and machine printer employing 80 men and 40 boys. In the 1871 England Census, William Cooper Birch is recorded living with his family in South Shore village, Bispham parish, Lancashire County, with a cook, a housemaid and a nurse for his young

children; his occupation was a calico printer employing 90 men, 30 boys, and 25 girls.

Other children were William Clarkson Birch (1856-1920), Thomas Clarkson Birch (1857-1897), Maria Clarkson Birch (1858-1937), Frank Clarkson Birch (1863-1923), and twins Edward Clarkson Birch (1870-1911), and Esther or Ethel Clarkson Birch (born 1870).

By the time of the 1871 England Census, **Henry Clarkson Birch** was no longer living with his parents. Henry Clarkson Birch became a second mate in the British Merchant Service on December 3, 1879, a first mate on August 12, 1881, and a master on December 12, 1884.

Harry Clarkson Birch came to San Diego about 1886, and his younger brother Arthur came with him or joined him thereafter [7,10]. In some San Diego writings, Henry Birch is called Harry... perhaps that was a nickname for Henry. Catharine Wood wrote about the Birch brothers in 1937 [2]:

A young Englishman, Harry C. Birch, homesteaded with his younger brother, Arthur C., on Birch Hill, now commonly known as Camp Sites. It seems the elder brother had been a second mate on a British vessel, and the life of a pioneer settler was new and strange to him.

Before going to Palomar he stayed for a time at the George Sawday ranch not far from the mountain. While there, he was given a can of axle grease and told to grease the wagon. After awhile he came in saying he wanted more grease. When asked what had become of that which had been given him, he replied that he had greased all the wagon but the "handle" (tongue) and he didn't have enough grease for that.

At the time the Birch boys were struggling to build their cabin, the east road ran over the hill instead of along the side as it did later. The young men cut the trees high above the ground to secure logs for their cabin, leaving tall stumps. One day a passerby viewed the growing structure and asked how it came that there were no doors or windows. The reply was that doors and windows would be cut out when the cabin was completed, but they never were. The boys

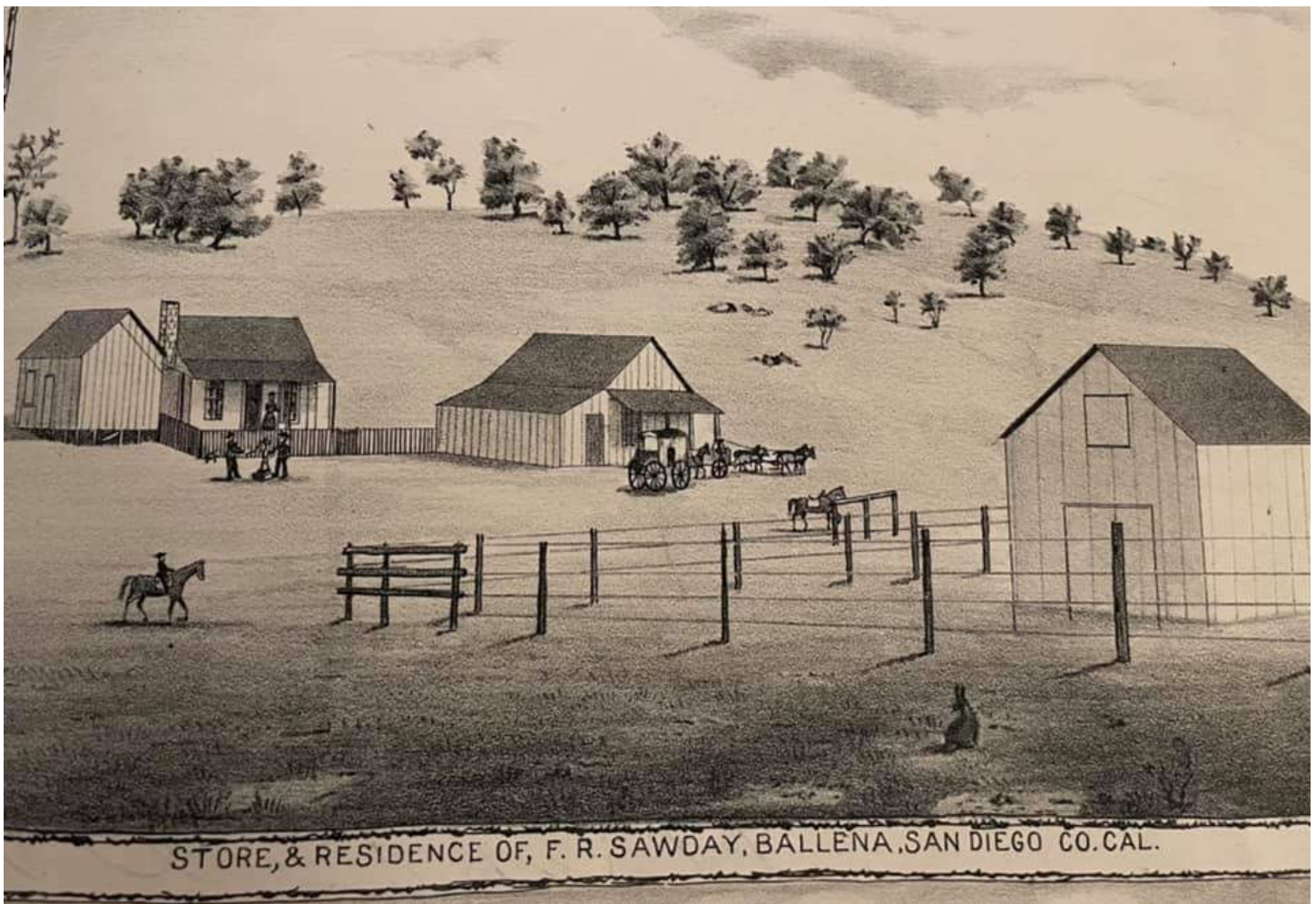
always entered and left through an opening under the gable end by means of a ladder.



The mountain residents evidently enjoyed the sometimes laughable efforts of the two young men to adjust themselves to totally unfamiliar situations, especially the time when the younger brother shot a squirrel with a white stripe down its back and brought it in with the remark that it didn't smell good.

The two eventually sold their claim and returned to England. The eldest son of the family was killed during the Boer War and Harry, next in line, inheriting the title, became Lord Harry Birch. Later he wrote a letter to George Cook. In it he mentioned other mountain friends, and said that he wished they could come to England -- that he would show them a good time, and they might be as green there as he was on Palomar.

Starting about 1881, Frederick Richard Sawday (1849-1931) had a ranch at Ballena/Witch Creek, between Ramona and Julian, and the F.R. Sawday ranch would be where Harry Birch stayed. Around 1904, one of his sons George A. Sawday (1876-1949) started ranching there, which is later than Harry Birch's time in the Sawday ranch anecdote above [8].



From: History of San Diego County, California ..., 1883 [9]

In 1974, Eloise Perkins writes about the Birch brothers [7]:

Harry Birch came to California as an officer on an English merchant ship. He was the second son of a British nobleman and his prospects were not the best, since his father's money was entailed with the title. Both were scheduled to go to his older brother. ... He decided that he would become a farmer in this infant land, as he called it, and traveled through much of the back country before deciding where to settle.

First he spent a time in El Cajon, probably working around a station on the San Diego to Julian stage line. There had been rumor of trouble with the Indians in the mountains near the Mexican border. In fact, several men brought their families to El Cajon and San Diego from the outlying ranches.

Birch, evidently remembering articles in English periodicals that he had read years before about the Sioux and other warring Plains Indians, asked a few questions of his new-found friends that revealed his ignorance of the Mission Indians. The men around the stage station decided that since he expected mounted savages with painted face and feathers, they would give him just that.

About dusk one evening he was aboard a stage coach coming down the Atkinson Brothers grade from Nuevo (now Ramona) towards El Cajon. Suddenly the stage was surrounded by dark-skinned men on horseback, their faces streaked with red and green paint and bands of feathers around their heads. Their shrieks filled the air. The driver whipped up his team and hurried toward the Cajon station, with the horsemen strung out behind. Later when Birch started to tell of the experience, his audience was convulsed with laughter. Several of the men then whipped out feathers and used them to stab at Birch.

Soon he moved to Witch Creek and worked for a brief period at the store of F.R. Sawday. One day Sawday handed him a can of axle grease and asked him to go out and grease a wagon which was standing at the side of the building. More than a hour later he came back to Sawday and asked for more grease.

“Why do you need more grease?” Sawday asked.

“I still have to grease the handle,” Birch replied.

The storekeeper and a customer rushed out to see what he meant. There stood the wagon, its wooden frame liberally ocovered with grease. Except the tongue which remained untouched. Birch hopped up on the wagon, evidently to point something out, and immediately slipped off.

Several weeks later he visited Palomar Mountain and decided this was the spot for his homestead. At about this time his brother Arthur came from England to stay with him. The two started construction of a log cabin on a small hill not far east of the present site of the Palomar Mountain Post Office at Thompson’s Summit.

They sawed trees nearby to get logs for the cabin and patiently laid them one on the other to form a rectangle. Just under the roof on one end they left an unenclosed space, through which they entered their domicile by use of a ladder. They had forgotten to put in windows and a door.

Arthur often hiked across the top of the mountain to Pauma Creek to fish with the trout gear he had purchased in Scotland before leaving the British Isles. He furnished fish for many of the young men's acquaintances in the area, since he was especially adept at casting great distances and hooking fish. He always carried his rifle with him on his fishing expeditions. One day he returned home with three fish and a small black animal with a white stripe down its back.

"This squirrel sure smells funny," he called to his brother and a visiting mountaineer. He was just starting up the ladder to enter the log cabin when the visitor looked out the opening above. Needless to say Arthur was stopped when the visitor saw the skunk he was carrying.

Once when Arthur went down the mountain with several other youths to do some shopping at a store at Warner's Ranch, they were invited to a fiesta by the Indians at the nearby hot springs. Among the delicacies were some little brown bits of toasted food. Arthur regurgitated his when he learned that they were grasshoppers, much desired as food by the Indians.

The Birches' father died and later their oldest brother was killed while serving with his regiment in the Boer War in South Africa. Harry was recalled to England to take his place in the House of Lords. They sold their homestead claim and boarded a ship for their native land. Harry later wrote to several friends on Palomar Mountain and invited them to visit him in England.

"I'll see that you see the country and have a good time," he wrote. "You may find things here a bit different than your home, but I hope you won't act as 'green' as I did."

On September 11, 1890, the San Diego Weekly Union, had a notice that H. C. Birch purchased lots in Poway for \$500 from F. R. Sawday [6].

On February 4, 1891, the San Diego Union wrote an article on a land acquisition by Arthur Birch, which dates the arrival of one or both Birches to the San Diego area around 1886 [4,10]:

Improvements at Linda Vista

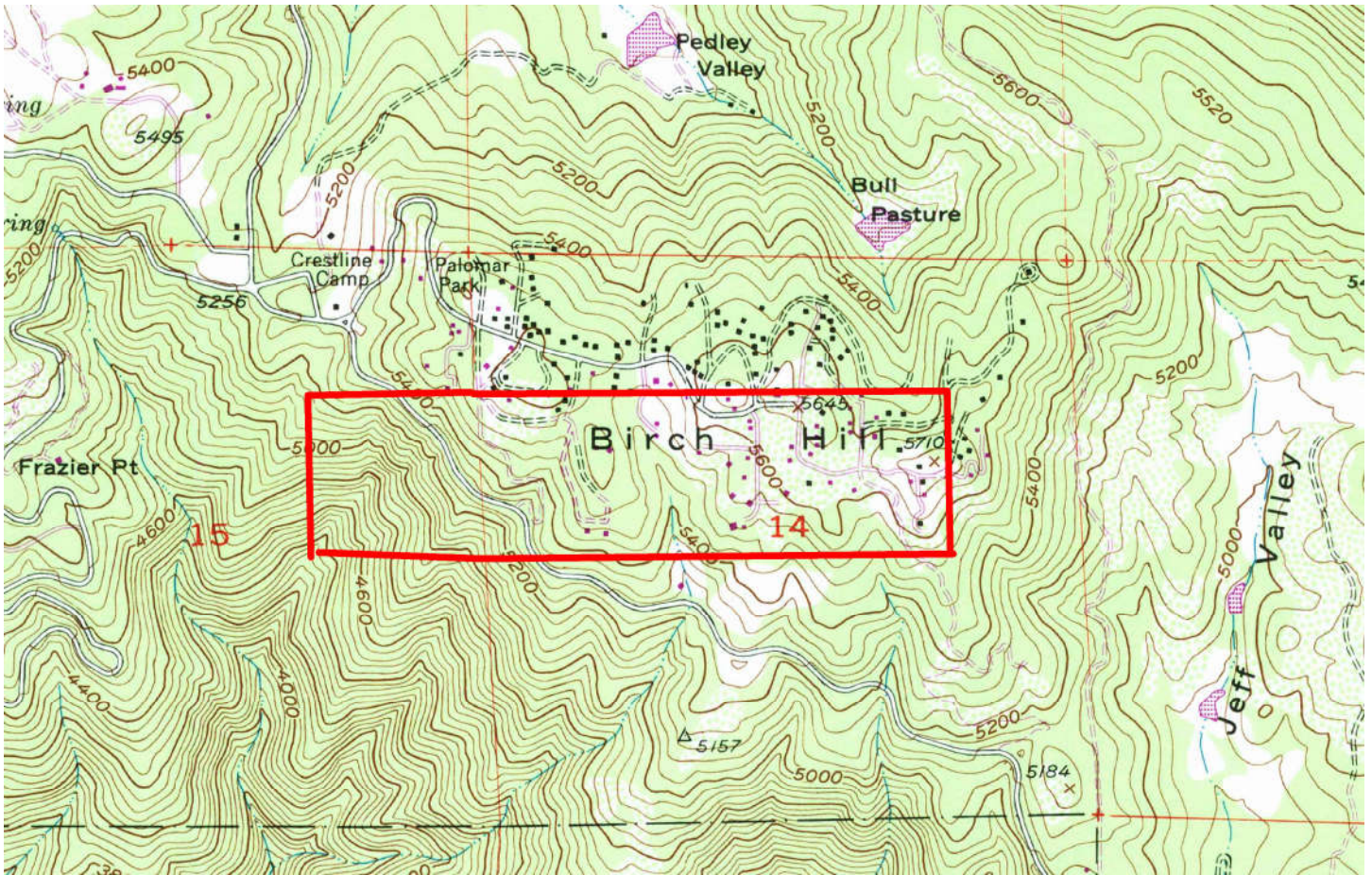
Another transfer of property for development is reported from the Linda Vista area. The quarter-section in the northeastern foothills held as a timber culture by Joseph Winchester, has been refiled on by Arthur Birch as a pre-emption, and last Monday he began putting up a cottage. Mr. Birch came over from England a half dozen years ago, and has concluded that cattle-raising in the Santa Maria neighborhood is not as profitable as orchard culture in the line of several project flumes. His place adjoins a foothill tract owned by John H. Gay, and is but a fourth of a mile from Scripps' tract where a canyon is being dammed for a reservoir.

That land of 160 acres is currently located east of the 15 Freeway, below Lake Miramar, and between Pomerado Road and MCAS Miramar, and adjacent to Thurgood Marshall Middle School, and was recorded on April 9, 1892 [4,11].

Henry C. Birch purchased 160 acres of land from the U.S. government on November 23, 1891; that land is located on Birch Hill on Palomar Mountain [4].



Henry Birch's land on Palomar Mountain, outlined on a 1903 map



Henry Birch's land on Palomar Mountain, outlined on a 1988 map

The San Diego Union reported on November 12, 1892, that Maria Warnock and others had begun legal proceedings to foreclose on a mortgage of \$850 against Henry C. Birch and John E. Smith [12]. The newspaper item did not locate the mortgaged property; the Warnocks were farmers in Ballena, where Henry Clarkson Birch had previously lived.

Two years and four months after purchase of the Birch Hill land on Palomar Mountain, the San Diego Weekly Union of March 23, 1893, had a notice that HC Birch sold it to BLA Monroe for \$800; Birch also sold his Poway lots to Monroe for \$1,400 [5].

Henry Clarkson Birch became a U.S. citizen in San Diego on June 29, 1893.

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE

DEPARTMENT 2.

170

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  **STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

PRESENT: HON. Geo. F. Burbagh JUDGE.

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF Henry Clarkson Birch an Alien, to become a CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

IN OPEN COURT, in Department No. 2, this 29th day of June, A. D. 1893.

IT APPEARING TO THE SATISFACTION OF THIS COURT, by the oaths of Joseph Burr and Wm. J. Kalsowich

Citizens of the United States of America, witnesses for that purpose first duly sworn and examined, that Henry Clarkson Birch

a native of England has resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States five years at least, last past, and within the State of California for one year last past, and that during all of said five years' time he has behaved as a man of good moral character, attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and well-disposed to the good order and happiness of the same; and it also appearing to the Court by competent evidence, that the said applicant has heretofore and more than two years since and in due form of law declared his intention to become a citizen of the United States, and having now here before this Court taken an oath that he will support the Constitution of the United States of America, and that he doth absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatever, and particularly to

Victoria Queen of Great Britain and Ireland

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED, that the said Henry Clarkson Birch be and he is hereby admitted and declared to be a CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

SIGNATURE: Henry Clarkson Birch RESIDENCE: San Diego, Cal.

SIGNATURE: Joseph Burr RESIDENCE: 1231 First St. San Diego, Cal.

SIGNATURE: Wm. J. Kalsowich RESIDENCE: San Diego, Cal.

Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, } ss.
County of San Diego, State of California.

I, _____ County Clerk and Ex-officio Clerk of the Superior Court, in and for the County of San Diego, State of California, said Court being a Court of Record, having common law jurisdiction and a Clerk and Seal, do certify that the above is a true copy of the Act of Naturalization of _____ as the same appears upon the Records of said Court, now in my office.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Seal of said Court, this _____ day of _____ in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and _____ and in the year of our Independence the one hundred and _____

Clerk. By _____ Deputy Clerk.

Seal.

Book 6 Page 115

Henry Clarkson Birch and his brother Arthur Clarkson Birch left Palomar Mountain and returned to England some time after Henry's U.S. citizenship in 1893 and before Arthur's marriage in England in 1896. Eloise Perkins wrote [7]:

The Birches' father died and later their oldest brother was killed while serving with his regiment in the Boer War in South Africa. Harry was recalled to England to take his place in the House of Lords.

Some of that is incorrect. Henry's father William Cooper Birch died on April 26, 1901, and left an estate valued at 21,710 pounds; he left it to his oldest son William Clarkson Birch and Howard Henry Swann, the husband of Maria Clarkson Birch. 21,710 pounds in 1901 is equivalent in purchasing power to 3,062,318 pounds in

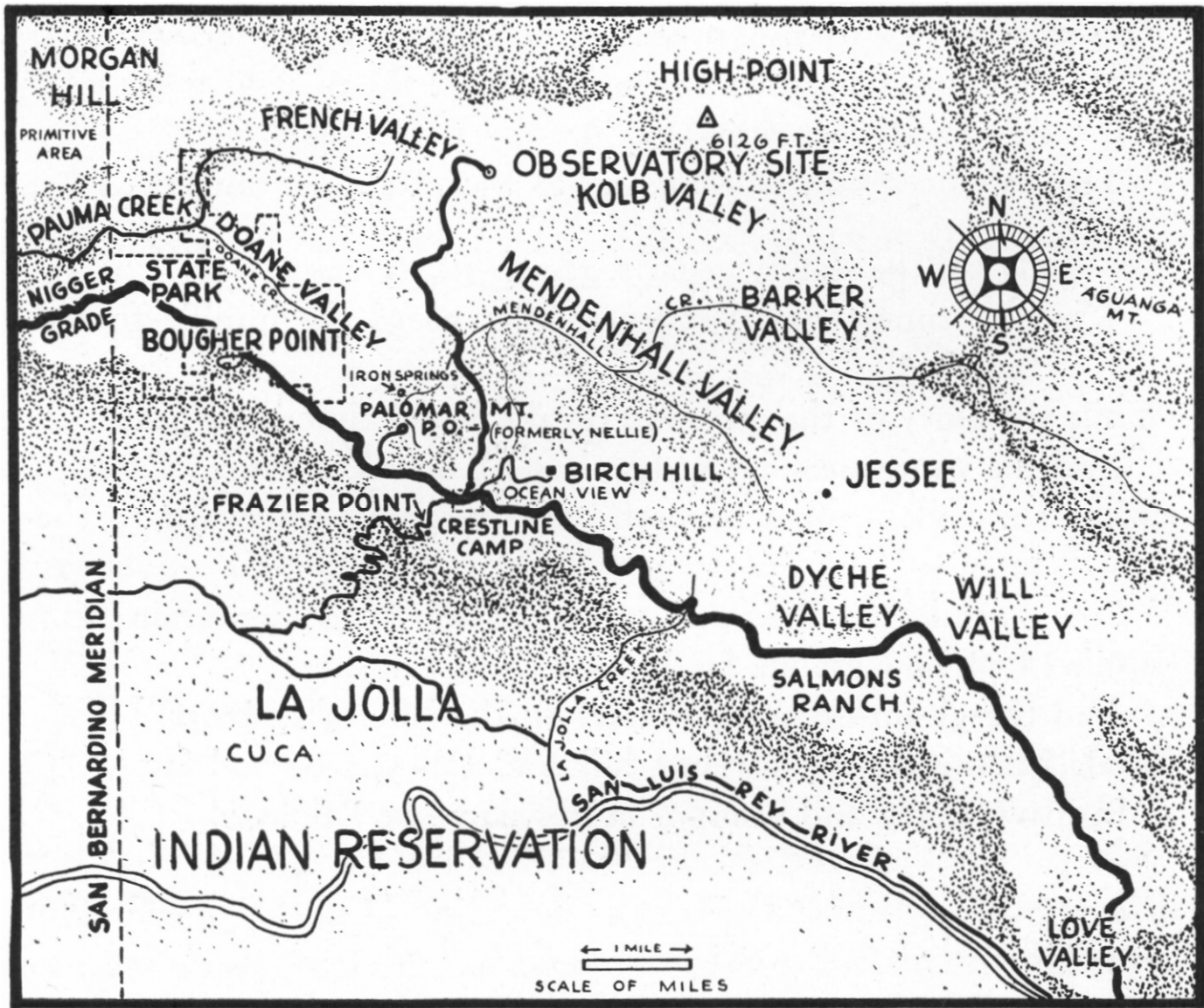
2022, which converts to \$3,692,129 in 2022. The Boer War was 1899 to 1902, and that oldest brother William Clarkson Birch died much later on June 1, 1920. Evidently Henry Clarkson Birch wasn't recalled from Palomar Mountain due to the death of his eldest brother.

In January, February or March 1896, brother Arthur Clarkson Birch married Lilian Emma Pullinger in Northamptonshire County; she was 23 and he was 26. Five years earlier, in the 1891 England Census, Lilian Pullinger (age 18 and born 1873 in Kent County) was living with her mother Elizabeth in Essex County, England (her first name is spelled in this census as Lillian but her name is usually spelled Lilian with one middle L). In that same 1891 England Census, Arthur Birch (age 21, and born in 1870), was living at Habergham Eaves, Lancashire County with his spouse Emma Birch (age 18, and born in 1873). Some scenario can explain Lilian's two 1891 census listings with her mother and her husband; her later recorded marriage date is after her husband returned from Palomar Mountain.

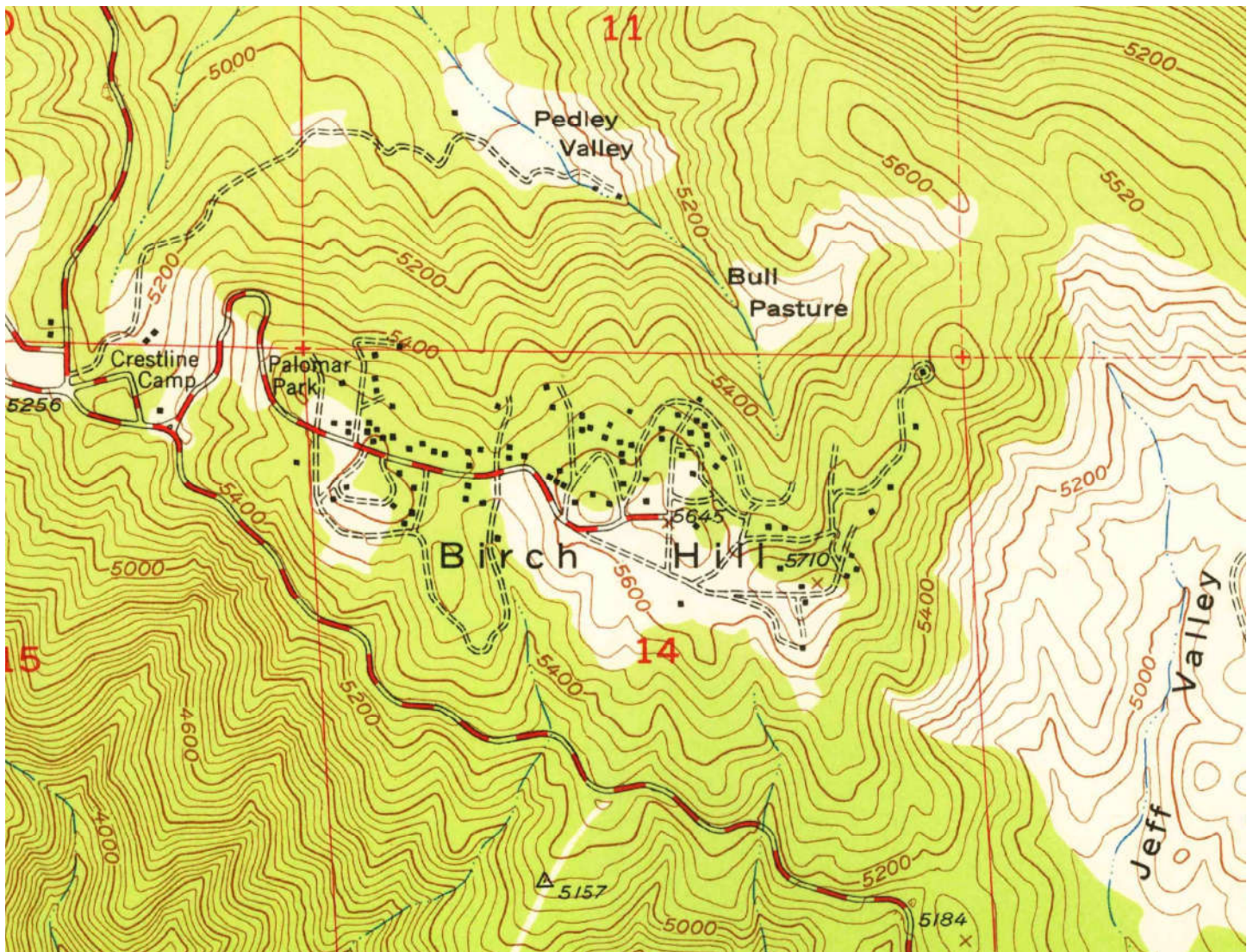
Henry Clarkson Birch married Louisa Elizabeth Charles (born about 1858) in England in January, February or March 1898. Henry Clarkson Birch is listed in the 1900 Kelly's Directory of Suffolk (England), living at El Rancho in Preston parish and village. Henry Clarkson Birch is listed in the 1911 Census of England and Wales in Walton, Suffolk County, living with and married for thirteen years to Louisa E. Birch; his younger brother Edward Clarkson Birch was living with them. Henry C. Birch died in April, May or June 1929, in Suffolk County, England, leaving his widow Louisa Birch, who died in 1937.

In the 1901 and 1911 England Census, his brother Arthur Clarkson Birch is living as a farmer in Ham Parish, Kent County, England with wife Lilian Emma Birch and sons Reginald Clarkson Birch (1897-1977), Douglas Clarkson Birch (1898-1969), daughter Linda Clarkson Birch (1899-x), and son Albert Clarkson Birch (1902-1969). Arthur Clarkson Birch died March 28, 1944, in England, leaving his widow Lilian Emma Birch, who died in 1954.

An early appearance of the name Birch Hill in a newspaper was in the San Diego Tribune-Sun on May 31, 1940 [1]. The name Birch Hill first appears on a map in Catharine Wood's 1937 book on Palomar Mountain history [2].



The name Birch Hill next appears on the 1949 U.S. Geological Survey map of Palomar Observatory (below), and thereafter on various maps.

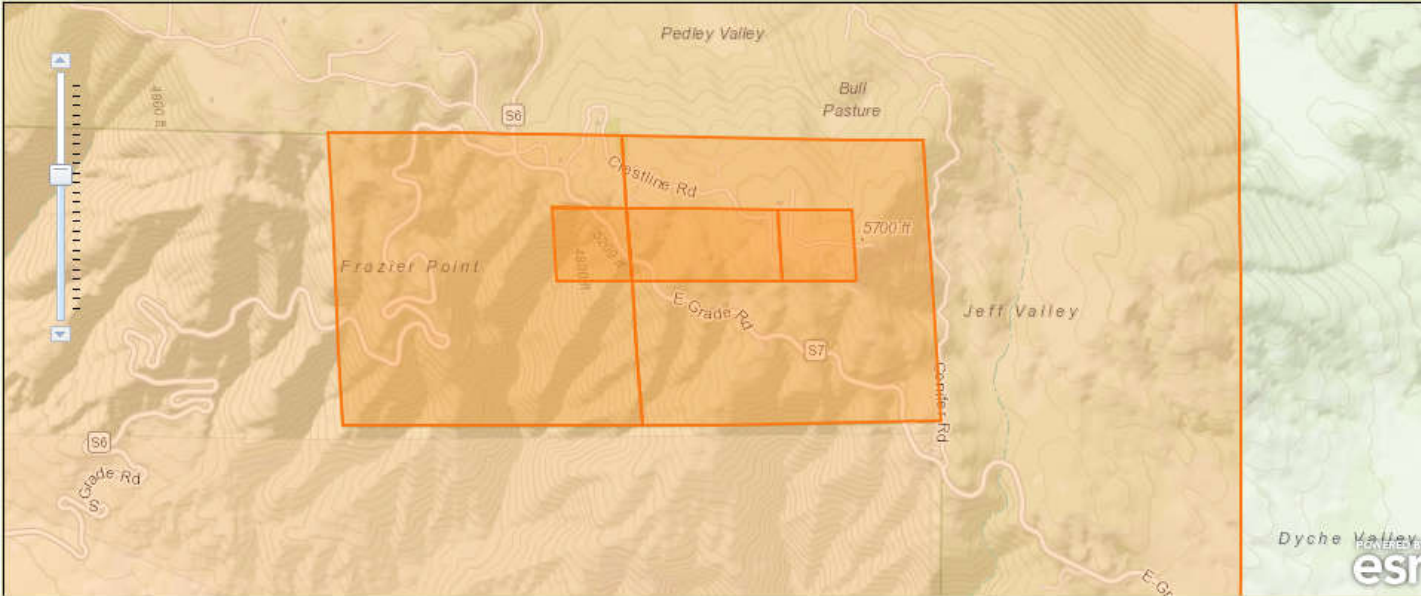


REFERENCES

1= San Diego Tribune-Sun, May 31, 1940, page 8, column 6
2= Palomar from Teepee to Telescope. Catharine M. Wood. San Diego: Frye & Smith, 1937 archive.org/details/wood_20230829
3= Palomar Mountain: Past and Present. Marion F. Beckler. Palm Desert, California: Desert Magazine, 1958 archive.org/details/beckler_20240126
4= U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records glorecords.blm.gov/

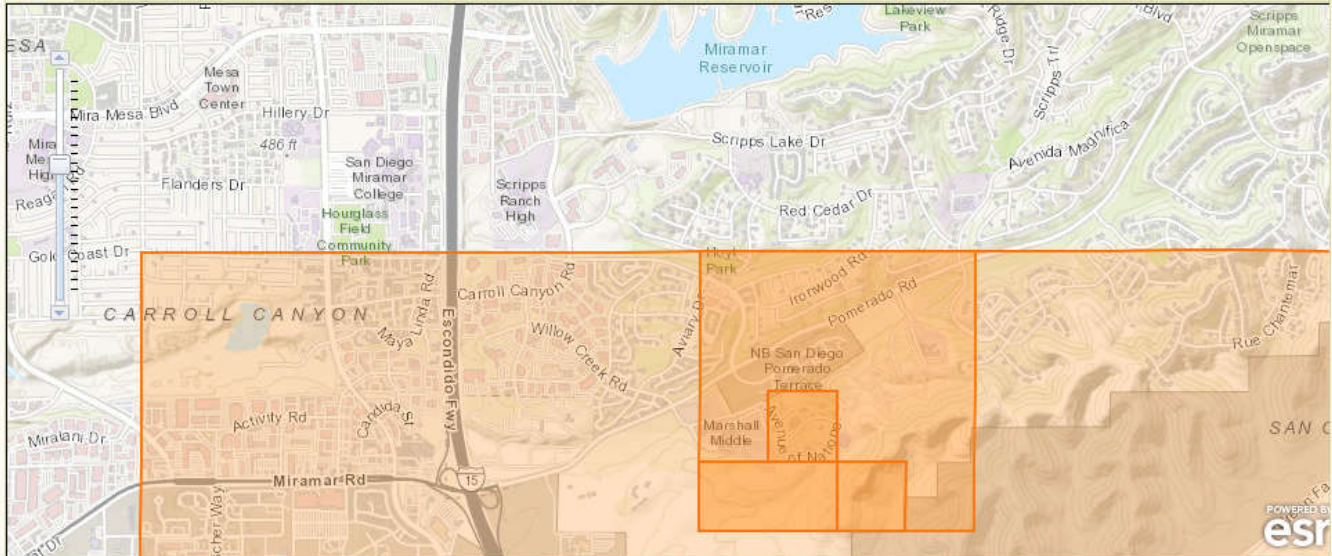
Document Numbers		Survey Information	
Document Nr:	4202	Total Acres:	160.00
Misc. Doc. Nr:	---	Survey Date:	---
BLM Serial Nr:	---	Geographic Name:	---
Indian Allot. Nr:	---	Metes/Bounds:	No
Coal Entry. Nr:	---		

Land Descriptions							
Map	State	Meridian	Twp - Rng	Aliquots	Section	Survey #	County
☒	CA	San Bernardino	010S - 001E	SW¼NE¼	14		San Diego
☒	CA	San Bernardino	010S - 001E	S½NW¼	14		San Diego
☒	CA	San Bernardino	010S - 001E	SE¼NE¼	15		San Diego



Document Numbers		Survey Information	
Document Nr:	4559	Total Acres:	160.00
Misc. Doc. Nr:	---	Survey Date:	---
BLM Serial Nr:	CACAAA 081808	Geographic Name:	---
Indian Allot. Nr:	---	Metes/Bounds:	No
Coal Entry. Nr:	---		

Land Descriptions							
Map	State	Meridian	Twp - Rng	Aliquots	Section	Survey #	County
☒	CA	San Bernardino	015S - 002W	S1/2SW1/4	4		San Diego
☒	CA	San Bernardino	015S - 002W	NE1/4SW1/4	4		San Diego
☒	CA	San Bernardino	015S - 002W	SW1/4SE1/4	4		San Diego



- 5= San Diego Weekly Union, March 23, 1893, page 2, column 6
6= San Diego Weekly Union, September 11, 1890, page 5, column 6
7= Escondido Times Advocate, April 7, 1974, Sunday Supplement, page 15
8= On Memory's Back Trail: the land and cattle empire of George Sawday. Darrell Beck. Ramona Home Journal. ramonajournalarchives.com/on-memorys-back-trail-the-land-and-cattle-empire-of-george-sawday-p5667-258.htm
9= History of San Diego County, California, With Illustrations Descriptive of its Scenery, Farms, Residences, Public Buildings, Factories, Hotels, Business Houses, Churches, and Mines. San Francisco: Wallace W. Elliott & Co., 1883
10= San Diego Union, February 4, 1891, page 5, column 3
11= San Diego Union, July 5, 1891, page 7, column 6
12= San Diego Union, November 12, 1892, page 5, column 1
13= San Diego Tribune-Sun, May 31, 1940, page 8, column 6